

ACCESSIBLE DATABASES

Basic environmental screening can help a local government direct projects away from sensitive areas. With geographic information systems (GIS) capabilities, local planners or town administrators have access to information about the distribution of rare species, wetlands, stream classifications and the like that can help them understand the resources that might be affected by a project. National Wetland Inventory maps are not a good source for presence/absence of wetlands.

Publicly accessible databases and information sources that can help a local government learn about wetlands, the presence of sensitive species and habitats include:

N.C. Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (CGIA) (<http://www.cgia.state.nc.us/>).

The traditional mission of the CGIA has been to build and maintain a statewide database of digital geographic information and to provide geographic information services to a broad list of clients—federal and state agencies, local government and regional organizations, the private sector and academic institutions. All work is performed on a cost recovery basis.

Among the products that CGIA offers is “Basin-Pro,” a two-CD collection of extensive environmental and river basin data (1.0 GB) packaged for local governments as an ArcGIS tool.

NC OneMap (<http://www.NCOneMap.com>).

NC OneMap links computer servers throughout the state to provide free access to federal, state, county and even municipal geographic data on the Internet. Government agencies, utilities, private firms, schools, universities and individual citizens can use an online data inventory to identify which agency manages the data. They can view, search and even download these data to create their own maps of a project site. New data sets will be added over time and data is up-

dated continuously. GIS software is not needed to access and view the data at NCOneMap.com, although manipulating downloaded data will require GIS capabilities.

N.C. Natural Heritage Program (<http://www.ncnhp.org>). Data about natural areas and rare species compiled by this agency have been used by local governments for designing and implementing ecologically sound development projects. This information has been used in planning pipeline corridors, roads, communication towers and municipal utility projects.

Data may include:

- ☉ GIS layers portraying records of endangered, threatened or special concern species; high quality natural communities; and significant natural heritage areas known in a region.
- ☉ County lists of rare species and high quality natural communities.

Local governments and consultants can find information about the life history and distribution of mussels in data compiled by biologists who conduct mussel surveys. Rare species and habitats should be identified well before projects are planned.

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